



UNIVERSITY
OF WOLLONGONG
AUSTRALIA

UOW SAFE@WORK

AGILE WORKPLACE SAFETY GUIDELINES

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1 Introduction

The University of Wollongong is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all workers, visitors and students. To meet this commitment, the University shall endeavour to control any risk to workplace health and safety through compliance with WHS legislation and the adoption of risk management principles into all work practices. The University's commitment extends to work completed in a traditional workplace or an agile workplace as described below.

In this guideline, the term "agile workplace" refers to authorised arrangements for staff to perform their work outside of a traditional workplace setting, including but not limited to 'working from home' and 'hot-desking' arrangements. Additionally, the term "ergonomic equipment" refers to workplace equipment and furniture, including but not limited to desks, chairs and monitors, provided to assist staff with undertaking work.

2 Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to provide advice to University managers and staff whilst working at an agile workplace. The aims are to:

- reduce the risk of injuries, such as occupational overuse and back strain, through the provision of suitable ergonomic equipment; and
- to satisfy the University's obligation under the Work Health and Safety legislation to provide a safe and healthy work environment.

3 Scope

This guideline applies to all University of Wollongong employees.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 Heads of School and Managers of Units

Heads of School and Managers of Units have a responsibility to ensure that their staff are able to work safely in an agile workplace and any associated ergonomic equipment is utilised in accordance with this guideline and any other associated WHS requirements.

4.2 Staff

Staff that are approved to work at agile workplaces must follow and cooperate with the University's policies and procedures.

4.3 Injury Management Coordinator

The Injury Management Coordinator, WHS Unit will provide advice on ergonomic matters and seek expert opinion where necessary. This advice will principally take the form of workplace assessments and recommendations at the planning stage and prior to the acquisition of new ergonomic equipment.

The Injury Management Coordinator will also arrange an external consultant or training programs on safe ergonomic practices as appropriate.

5 Definitions

Agile workplace	An autonomous work arrangement whereby staff can perform regular work duties in locations or times that is flexible. This may include collaborative workspaces, working from home or at other workplaces and ‘hot desk’ arrangements.
Ergonomic equipment	Chairs, stools, desks, benches, computers, and other equipment or aids that assist with the interaction of humans and work.
Hot desking	The allocation of desks to staff as they are available or on a rota system, rather than giving each staff their own desk.
Staff	All persons appointed by the University as academic or professional services staff regardless of their level of seniority and regardless of whether holding full-time, part-time, or limited-term appointments, including conjoint appointments. For the purposes of this guideline, it also includes all persons engaged by the University as casual employees.
Supervisor	Person who is responsible for the day-to-day supervision of a staff member.
University	University of Wollongong.
Working from home	The performance of duties at a non-commercial private-dwelling as agreed between the University and the staff member.

6 General Principles

Consideration must be given to the nature of the work being undertaken at the agile workplace and whether this can be conducted safely and productively. This also includes consideration for:

- the staff member’s demonstrated competence
- the facilities to be used including any information technology or communication needs
- hours of work
- communication, monitoring and reporting requirements
- any effects on colleagues or equity, and
- whether service delivery or operational needs may be adversely affected.

The ability to work in an agile workplace is an arrangement between the supervisor and employee. Authority to approve agile work arrangements rests with the Head of School/Manager of Unit. Approval will be recorded using the Agile Working Arrangement Form and retained by the Unit.

The University has obligations under the *WHS Act 2011 (NSW)* and *WHS Regulation 2011 (NSW)* to ensure a safe work environment and this also applies for agile work arrangements. This includes consulting on any proposed changes to the workplace, equipment or environment.

In regards to working at other workplaces (e.g. another Person or Business Conducting an Undertaking (PCBU) controls the premises) the controller of that premises is required to provide a safe work environment.

Where employees work from home the provision of safe work equipment such as desks or chairs is required. If the staff member has a substantial fully equipped workplace at a campus location any costs

required to upgrade facilities at home to meet Australian Standards or University requirements will be required to be provided by the employee unless approved by the Supervisor.

In the circumstance that the staff member has insufficient equipment, the Head of School/Manager of Unit may, at their discretion, agree to financially support or supply the equipment needed on a case-by-case basis. In the instance that equipment is provided to the staff member by the University, a list of equipment and respective ownership of each piece of equipment will be compiled by the University and staff member. Any equipment supplied by the University must be returned upon completion of the agile workplace arrangement.

Where an agile working arrangement consists of working from home the University may require access (with the employee's consent) to the employee's home to undertake the following:

- assessing and monitoring security arrangements of equipment and documents
- WHS inspections and risk assessments
- incident investigation, and
- supervision.

Failure for the employee to provide consent without an appropriate reason may cancel or suspend the agile working arrangement.

7 Workers Compensation

Members of staff undertaking authorised work from an agile workplace are covered under the same principles of workers compensation that apply to staff on campus. If a staff member is to sustain an injury or illness whilst undertaking authorised work off campus, the staff member is required to report the injury or illness to their supervisor or via the SafetyNet online system as soon as practicable.

8 Application

8.1 Agile Workplace Design

Agile workplaces for the University will be designed and constructed using ergonomic principles based on WHS legislation, Australian Standards and any other University requirements.

8.2 Working at Another Premises

Where employees are required to work at a location not controlled by the University (and is not the employee's private dwelling) and the equipment such as desk and chairs do not adequately meet Australian Standards or University requirements this shall be raised with the appropriate PCBU in the first instance. If the issue cannot be resolved the matter should be raised with the employee's supervisor. If the issue cannot be resolved the employee will be required to work at University until such a time the issue is resolved.

When working at other premises on a permanent basis the Agile Workplace Agreement Form is to be completed.

8.3 Working From Home

Where employees require a formalised working from home arrangement the Agile Workplace Arrangement Form is to be completed by the employee and supervisor. Advice on application of this guideline can be sought from the WHS Unit. External consultants such as a rehabilitation provider may be utilised when there are complications regarding the working from home arrangement e.g. when there is a pre-existing injury.

Where a working from home arrangement is on an ad-hoc basis and approved by the supervisor, ergonomic principles are required to be applied which are outlined on the UOW Safe@Work website: <https://www.uow.edu.au/about/services/safe-at-work/safety-topics/ergonomic-workstation-setup/>

9 Further Assistance

Further assistance on the application of these guidelines may be sought from the People & Culture Division:

- WHS Unit for work health and safety matters including ergonomic assessment or adjustment requirements, and
- Employment Relations for matters concerning employment or the enterprise agreement.

10 Version Control Table

Version Control	Date Released	Approved By	Amendment
1	July 2017	Manager WHS	New document created
2	February 2023	Manager WHS	Document updated to incorporate the Human Resources Division name change to People & Culture.